

CELEBRATING THE DAY OF THE DEAD



Ooh, skeletons and skulls! Don't be scared, they're friendly. Toy skeletons hold bunches of flowers and ride in tiny cars, and the skulls are made of sugar and are tasty to eat.

A Joyful Fiesta

In Mexico, at the beginning of November, it's time to celebrate *El Dia de Los Muertos* (The Day of the Dead). *El Dia de Los Muertos* is a joyful fiesta honoring family and friends who are dead. While it is near Halloween, it is not the same thing at all—there is nothing scary about it. Papier-mâché skeletons decorate bakeries, where yummy *pan de muertos* (bread of the dead) is sold. Children play with little toy skeletons. Brightly colored tissue-paper banners are strung across streets.

Getting Prepared

At home, people set up altars, or special tables, and arrange them carefully with photographs, bright yellow and orange flowers, and favorite foods of their dead relatives. Each family makes their altar a little differently, but they usually have salt, bread, and candles. There might also be a bowl of water, soap, and a mirror, so the spirits can wash up when they arrive. The fragrance of flowers and bread and the

EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS



sounds of fireworks and church bells invite the spirits of the dead to come home for a visit. A path of salt or flower petals leads from the front door to the altar.

Honoring the Dead

On November 2, family groups go to the cemetery where their relatives are buried. They pray, and clean and decorate the graves. They sing the relatives' favorite songs, as the Aztecs used to do. They have picnics with special foods. By celebrating *El Dia de Los Muertos*, families make sure their ancestors know they haven't been forgotten.



Adapted from an article by
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